

Claims

What is claimed is:

1. A method for searching for a selected role within a hierarchical organizational structure comprising:
 - (a) identifying a first position within the organizational structure;
 - (b) identifying a second position which is immediately above the first position in the organizational structure;
 - (c) if the second position is associated with the selected role, terminating the search;
 - (d) if the second position is not associated with the selected role, searching positions below the second position in the organizational structure; and
 - (e) if the selected role is not found among the positions below the second position in the organizational structure, repeating (b)-(e) from the second position.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein identifying the first position comprises identifying a position associated with a position initiating a business process.
3. The method of claim 1 further comprising identifying the selected role, wherein identifying the selected role comprises identifying a role which is required to authorize the business process.
4. The method of claim 3 wherein identifying a role which is required to authorize the business process comprises selecting an entry in an authorization matrix corresponding to a set of conditions which obtain for the business process.
5. The method of claim 4 wherein selecting an entry in the authorization matrix comprises determining whether one or more trip points associated with the authorization

matrix have been triggered and, if so, selecting an entry corresponding to the triggered trip points.

6. The method of claim 1 wherein one or more of the roles associated with positions in the hierarchical organizational structure is not unique.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein the selected role is associated with a plurality of unique positions within the organizational structure.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein positions below the second position in the organizational structure are searched in accordance with a predetermined pattern.

9. The method of claim 1 further comprising defining the organizational structure as a hierarchical structure and defining a hierarchical role structure within which the roles associated with the positions are organized, wherein the hierarchical role structure is distinct from the hierarchical organizational structure.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein the hierarchical role structure comprises at least one of the structures consisting of: a hierarchical functional role structure; a hierarchical superiority role structure; and a hierarchical legal role structure.

11. The method of claim 9 wherein the hierarchical role structure comprises at least two of the structures consisting of: a hierarchical functional role structure; a hierarchical superiority role structure; and a hierarchical legal role structure.

12. The method of claim 9 wherein the hierarchical role structure comprises: a hierarchical functional role structure; a hierarchical superiority role structure; and a hierarchical legal role structure.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein the functional role comprises hierarchical levels of a job function.
14. The method of claim 12 wherein the superiority role comprises hierarchical levels of the title.
15. The method of claim 14 wherein the superiority role further comprises subsets of grade.
16. The method of claim 14 wherein the superiority role further comprises EEO classification.
17. The method of claim 14 wherein the superiority role further comprises job classification.
18. The method of claim 1 wherein the selected role comprises a first selected role and wherein the method further comprises searching for a second selected role.
19. The method of claim 18 wherein searching for the first and second selected roles comprises repeating (a) - (e) for each of the first and second selected roles.
20. The method of claim 18 wherein searching for the first and second selected roles comprises concurrently searching for the first selected role and the second selected role.
21. A method for managing access to business processes, comprising:
 - providing an organization structure having a plurality of unique positions, wherein a member of the organization is associated with each of the positions;
 - providing a hierarchical role structure;
 - associating each of the positions in the organization structure with a role in the hierarchical role structure;

associating access rights for one or more business processes with each role in the hierarchical role structure; and
enabling each member of the organization to access business processes in accordance with the access rights associated with the member's position and corresponding role.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein the hierarchical role structure comprises one or more functional levels and one or more superiority levels.

23. The method of claim 22 wherein the hierarchical role structure further comprises one or more legal levels.

24. A method for obtaining approval for a business process comprising:
selecting an approval matrix associated with the business process;
determining whether any trip points identified in the approval matrix are met;
selecting a set of roles from the approval matrix based on the trip points identified in the approval matrix, wherein the roles are required approvers of the business process;
identifying a position corresponding to each of the roles in the set of roles; and
obtaining approval from each of the identified positions.

25. The method of claim 24 wherein identifying a position corresponding to each of the roles in the set of roles comprises, for each role:

- (a) identifying a first position within the organizational structure, wherein the first position is associated with the initiation of the business process;
- (b) identifying a second position which is immediately above the first position in the organizational structure;
- (c) if the second position is associated with the role, selecting the position;

- (d) if the second position is not associated with the role, searching positions below the second position in the organizational structure for a position associated with the role; and
- (e) if the role is not associated with any of the positions below the second position in the organizational structure, repeating (b)-(e) from the second position.

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